

XIX. "On the Immediate Principles of the Excrements of Man and Animals in the Healthy Condition." By WILLIAM MARCET, M.D. Communicated by F. MARCET, F.R.S.
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The author describes a new method of extracting the immediate chemical constituents of the excrements of Man and animals, and gives an account of the substances obtained by its employment.

Healthy human fæces are boiled to exhaustion in alcohol. The residue is insoluble in ether, and yields to boiling water nothing but ammoniaco-magnesian phosphate. The strained alcoholic solution deposits, on standing, a sediment, from which it is decanted and then mixed with milk of lime. The subsiding lime is of a yellow-brown colour; it is dried on filtering-paper and treated with ether, cold or hot, and the solution thus obtained yields, on spontaneous evaporation, beautiful silky crystals, which are purified by solution in a mixture of alcohol and ether, repeated filtration through animal charcoal and recrystallization; they then appear in circular groups, have the form of acicular four-sided prisms, and polarize light very readily. This crystalline body the author proposes to call *Excretine*. It is very soluble in ether, cold or hot, but sparingly soluble in cold alcohol; its solution has a decided though weak alkaline reaction. It is insoluble in hot or cold water, and is not decomposed by dilute mineral acids. It fuses between 95° and 96° C., and at a higher temperature burns away without inorganic residue. When boiled with solution of potash it does not dissolve. As to its qualitative constitution, it is found to contain nitrogen and sulphur, though in small proportions; the products of its decomposition have not yet been investigated.

The author has in several cases observed the excretine to crystallize directly in the alcoholic solution of fæces before the addition of lime, and has scarcely any doubt that it exists for the most part in a free state in the excrements, and constitutes one of their immediate principles. As to its source, he observes that it appeared in excess when a considerable quantity of beef had been taken, and in less than the usual quantity in a case of diarrhœa attended with loss of appetite; but none could be directly obtained from beef on

subjecting it to the same process of extraction as fæces. Neither could it be found in ox-bile, the urine, or the substance of the spleen. From the difficulty of obtaining the contents of the human small intestine in a healthy state, its presence or absence in that part of the alimentary canal has not yet been satisfactorily determined.

The lime precipitate, after having been thus thoroughly deprived of the excretine by ether, is next treated with hydrochloric acid, and water or alcohol, by which means margaric acid is extracted from it. The author is uncertain whether the margaric acid of the fæces is free or combined with excretine, but he is disposed to conclude that the neutral fats are decomposed in the intestinal canal and their acid set free. Not having been able to detect stearic acid in human evacuations, he supposes that what is contained in the fat of mutton or beef taken as food must be converted into margaric acid in its passage through the alimentary canal.

The lime precipitate, freed from excretine and dissolved in alcohol by means of hydrochloric acid, forms a dark port-wine-coloured solution, from which the margaric acid is deposited. On then adding water to the solution and concentrating it on the water-bath, a flaky colouring matter separates, which, being purified by solution in ether and washing with water, is obtained as a dark-brown or black amorphous substance, similar to the colouring matter of blood, and to that which Dr. Harley has lately extracted from urine.

The matters brought down with the lime having been thus extracted, the sediment which spontaneously subsides from the alcoholic solution of fæces before its treatment with the milk of lime, is next examined. This deposit appears to be complex in its nature; it has a strongly acid reaction, and presents under the microscope small oily globules, mixed sometimes with crystals of excretine and accompanied by a yellow amorphous matter. By boiling with alcohol and filtration, a residue remains which the author has not yet examined, and two substances are obtained from the filtrate. The first is deposited on cooling; when collected and dried on filtering-paper it has a granular character and is quite colourless; it is very sparingly soluble in ether, fuses by heat, and burns with a bright fuliginous flame, leaving a white residue consisting of phosphate of potash. The author has not yet been able satisfactorily to decide whether this is a pure immediate principle or not; he is inclined to consider

it as a combination of phosphate of potash and a pure organic substance. The filtered fluid, after separation of this matter, still contains a substance which he has called *Excretolic acid*. It is obtained by evaporating to dryness, extracting the residue with ether, adding to the ethereal solution alcohol and lime-water, and heating. The acid is precipitated in combination with lime, from which it is separated by means of sulphuric or hydrochloric acid and solution in ether. The ethereal solution, after being well washed with water to remove mineral acid, yields the pure excretolic acid on evaporation. This body is of an olive colour; it fuses between 25° and 26° C., and at a higher temperature burns without residue. It is insoluble in water and in a boiling solution of potash; very soluble in ether, sparingly soluble in cold alcohol, readily so in hot; its solutions having a marked acid reaction. The author is disposed to believe that in excrement it is combined in form of a salt, with excretine or a basic substance closely allied to it, which is obtained in the filtrate from which the excretolic acid is precipitated in combination with lime in the process of its purification.

The author failed to obtain evidence of the presence either of butyric or of lactic acid in the clear alcoholic solution of fæces filtered from the precipitate formed by the milk of lime. From the above investigation, therefore, it appears that healthy human excrements contain :—

1. A new organic substance, possessing an alkaline reaction, which the author names *Excretine*.

2. A fatty acid, having the properties of margaric acid, but not constantly present.

3. A colouring matter, similar to that of blood and urine.

4. A light granular substance, whose properties have not yet been sufficiently examined to admit of its being considered a pure substance.

5. An acid olive-coloured substance, of a fatty nature, named *Excretolic acid*.

6. No butyric acid and no lactic acid.

The fæces of various animals were submitted to the same process of analysis, with the following results :—

1. The excrements of carnivorous mammalia, viz. the Tiger, Leopard and Dog (fed on meat), contain a substance allied in its na-

ture to excretine, but not identical with it. They contain no excretine; they yield butyric acid, which is not present in human excrements.

2. The excrements of the Crocodile contain cholesterine and no uric acid, whilst those of the Boa yield uric acid and no cholesterine.

3. The fæces of herbivorous animals, viz. the Horse, Sheep, Dog (fed on bread), Wild Boar, Elephant, Deer and Monkey, contain no excretine, no butyric acid and no cholesterine.

XX. "On the Vine-Disease in the Port-wine Districts of the Alto-Douro, in April 1854. With a Supplementary Note on the Proposed Remedies for its Eradication." By JOS. JAMES FORRESTER, Esq., F.R.G.S. Communicated by J. P. GASSIOT, Esq., F.R.S. Received May 17, 1854.

In Portugal, where the vine-disease committed great ravages last year, no measures have as yet been adopted for ascertaining whether the disease is *radical*, or only superficial; or whether any *practical remedy* may be adopted in order to arrest the progress of the evil.

At Oporto, and in the north of Portugal, an opinion prevails—

"That the *Oidium* is the *effect*, and not the *cause* of the epidemic.

"That the roots and the wood of the vines are diseased.

"That *sporules* of the *Oidium* exist in the interior of the vine, and about its roots.

"That the obstruction to the ascent of the sap through the various ducts, originates in the roots.

"That black spots appear in the joints of the branches, indicating that disease exists throughout the body of the vine.

"That a new fungus has appeared on the vines, in the shape of small globules, containing carbonic acid.

And "that, although vegetation may continue for a while, the fruit will not ripen, and the vines will die in a couple of years from this date."

Considering that it would be of some importance to determine whether the disease has its origin in the roots or from external